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Ag in the Classroom

CZ ADEBS

A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact: Shirley Traxler, Director, Room 234-W, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. 202/447-5727

United States Department of Agriculture



March/April 1988 Vol. 3, No. 3

Celebrate Agriculture!

In recognition of the men and women whose hard work and dedication give us the most abundant, highest quality food and fiber supply in history, March 20th, Ag Day, has been set aside for "Honoring Americas Providers."

The day opens the festivities of Agriculture week, which will be celebrated in communities, cities and state governments across the nation. Secretary of Agriculture Richard E. Lyng is the honorary chairman of the event, which has been observed since 1973.

A specially commissioned poster by artist Bart Forbes will commemorate this year's observance, with a life-sized reproduction featured in a display on Capitol Hill during Ag Week.

To help you celebrate Ag Day, here is a list of questions to test your knowledge of agriculture:

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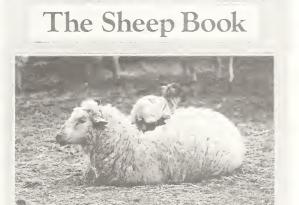
Artist Bart Forbes' poster captures the essence of this year's theme for Ag Day, "Honoring America's Providers."

Picture Perfect Ag Books!

"A lot of times I'm writing to the child in myself," says Dorothy Hinshaw Patent, author of over 25 non-fiction books for children. Her stories about barnyard animals and the very important jobs they perform entertain and educate children at the same time. Four of Patent's books are listed in the *Ag in the Classroom Library Guide to Books About Agriculture*.

A zoologist by training, Patent combines her love for children and animals in her stories. Through simple, easy-to-read language and charming photography by William Munoz, she creates endearing characters out of the most ordinary farm creatures.

Patent began her writing career in 1971 with a continued on page 7



A few of Dorothy Hinshaw Patent's favorite "characters" strike a pose for the cover of one of her farm animal books.

From the Director

Dear Readers.

The Ag in the Classroom National Conference will be June 5-7, 1988, at the Capitol Holiday Inn, 550 C Street, SW, Washington, D.C. If you plan to attend, please return the registration form included in this newsletter.

This year's conference theme, "Educating for the 21st Century," will remind attendees that today's kindergarteners will be graduating from high school in the next century.

Registration begins on June 5 at 2:00 p.m. The first session will be at 3:00 p.m. for state contacts, followed by a workshop for newcomers.

On the following day and a half, there will be workshops and roundtable discussions, and you

will be able to learn about what's going on in Ag in the Classroom around the country by visiting exhibits and talking with your counterparts from other states.

The conference will end at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 7. You may want to stay over an extra day to do some sightseeing or to visit your members of the House and Senate on Capitol Hill.

We hope to see you at the conference!

Yours truly,

Shirty Viafles

Shirley Traxler

Oklahoma AITC Gains Momentum



"Everything begins with the land," is Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom's theme, and from that single idea, a full-fledged program has grown.

While AITC efforts in Oklahoma originally began in 1983, it has been within the past year that the program has blossomed. With assistance from Oklahoma State University, 4-H and the Cooperative Extension Service, AITC Coordinator JoDahl Theimer is prepared for a busy spring. "It's just getting to the point now when it's going to snowball on us!" she says of the program's appeal.

Theimer got an indication of AITC's popularity when she set up a booth at a teachers' convention last fall. Over 100 teachers signed up to participate in a pilot program for first, third and fifth grades.

Registration for 1988 AITC National Conference

The classroom lessons are in the form of activity sheets, explained Theimer. The sheets are cross-referenced and organized in a file box for easy use. A teacher's guide accompanies the lessons. Currently, Theimer is sending out evaluations for the pilot program, with results expected back in April. Spring 1989 is the scheduled release date for the curriculum, which will eventually be expanded to all 12 grades.

Oklahoma AITC will take its show on the road in May, where Theimer and others will be the featured speakers at a principals' convention. They have also been visiting with commodity groups and women's organizations in an effort to find sponsors for materials and activities.

If you plan to attend the 1988 Ag in the Classroom National Conference, please complete this form and return it to:	(If you are sharing a room, please submit only one reservation.)			
Heritage Travel Conference Service	Check one of the following:			
5 L'Enfant Plaza SW ashington, D.C. 20024	Single: 1 person — \$75.00 Double: \$90.00			
Attention: Beatina Coe	All reservations must be accompanied by a one-night deposit in the form of a check, or the following credit card information: Credit card: Name			
Name				
Telephone				
'	Number Expiration date			
Address				

Your signature _

Please enclose with this form your payment of \$50 to cover conference costs, including lunches on June 6th and 7th. Make check or money order payable to Heritage Travel Conference Service.

Reservations must be made by May 6, 1988. If you need assistance with travel arrangements, call Heritage Travel, toll-free, at: 1-800-626-5200.

Celebrate Agriculture!

continued from page 1

- 1. Which foreign country, in terms of dollar amount, purchases the most agricultural products from the U.S.?
- A. Japan
- B. Russia
- C. Egypt
- D. Mexico
- 2. A large Red Delicious apple costs 59 cents in the U.S. What would a large Japanese apple cost in Japan?
- A. \$0.50
- B. \$3.00
- C. \$10.00
- 3. The U.S. is the world's largest exporter of farm products. How much of the U.S. food production is being sold to other countries? (1985)
- A. 15%
- B. 25%
- C. 50%
- D. 75%
- 4. Which product makes up the largest amount of food aid that we supply to poor countries as emergency assistance?
- A. wheat
- B. dried beans
- C. milk
- D. potatoes
- 5. What is cassava?
- A. a rug
- B. a plant
- C. a fish
- D. an animal

- 6. A Brazilian farmer/rancher produces enough food and fiber for 4 people. American farmers are more efficient. One American farmer/rancher produces enough for:
- A. 20 people
- B. 40 people
- C. 92 people
- D. 114 people
- 7. U.S. farmers grow much more of one kind of vegetable than any other. It is:
- A. Tomatoes
- B. Potatoes
- C. Spinach
- D. Green peas
- 8. How many quarts of milk does an average dairy cow produce in her lifetime?
- A. 5,000 quarts
- B. 32,000 quarts
- C. 45,000 quarts
- D. 140,000 quarts
- 9. What is the difference between a brown egg and a white egg?
- A. The color
- B. Brown eggs take longer to cook
- C. White eggs are more nutritious
- D. Brown shells break easier than white
- 10. How many days does it take for a chicken egg to hatch?
- A. 7 days
- B. 12 days
- C. 21 days
- D. 30 days

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Vermont Teachers Get a Taste of the Dairy Industry

After attending a series of after-school Ag in the Classroom workshops, teachers in Caledonia County, Vermont, have a good idea of what happens after the cow is milked.

This past winter, AITC's three-part dairy workshop gave elementary school teachers the opportunity to learn about everything from herd management to cheese production. The workshops included two field trips—to a dairy farm and a creamery—as well as a presentation about nutrition by the Vermont Dairy Council.

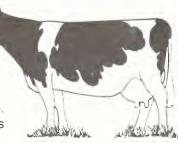
"The reaction to the workshops has been very positive," says Tim Mckay of Vermont's AITC Local Action Board. "In fact, many of the teachers who participated are planning student field trips for the spring."

McKay says more local workshop programs are on the agenda. The next area to be covered will be

maple sugaring, which will include trips to local sugar production houses. "I think the local approach to teacher training has worked well here. It's an easy way to get things done, to get teachers and ag professionals together."

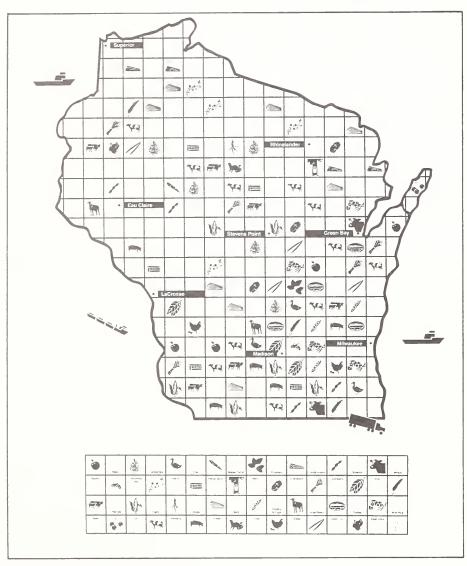
Michelle Green was one of the teachers who had a chance to learn from some of Vermont's ag professionals. "It's a fantastic thing for a teacher to watch another professional at work. And the dairy farmers we met really appreciated our interest.

"All of the teachers who attended the dairy workshops live in a rural area. We drive by farms every day, but it doesn't compare to visiting the farm and interacting with the farmers. There are so many things to learn. This kind of workshop makes it easier to stand before a classroom and teach students about agriculture."



Wisconsin Ag Poster a Top Commodity

A new agricultural products poster is getting rave reviews from teachers and students throughout Wisconsin. "Teachers were telling us they needed



Wisconsin Agricultural Products' poster

more materials about our state, so we produced the 'Wisconsin Agricultural Products' poster," explains Anna Maenner, executive administrator of the Wisconsin Agri-Business Council.

The free, full-color poster was recently distributed to every elementary school in Wisconsin. The poster features a grid-pattern breakdown of the state's top 32 ag products, giving students a geographical perspective of Wisconsin agriculture. "Teachers love the poster because it is a map. They can refer to it when they're teaching many subject areas.

"To make the poster a complete educational tool, we also developed a lesson plan," Maenner adds. The plan includes activity sheets, puzzles and questions designed to encourage students to study the poster, and to think about the challenges today's farmer must face.

Maenner has been presenting the poster and lesson plan to schools throughout the state and says the response has been enthusiastic. "The children were very excited about the poster, and they asked me some surprising questions, like why we use pesticides, how a cow produces milk, and how ginseng is used. It was also interesting to see the students relate agriculture to geography. They would look at the poster and recall driving by mint and corn fields in the corresponding areas of the map."

Production and distribution of the poster was funded through corporate donations. "Community response has been very positive," Maenner says. "Many companies have helped to get the project off the ground. In fact, we're now urging companies to display the poster so the general public can be exposed to agriculture too. It's an excellent way to rekindle Wisconsin pride!

"I hear that other states are considering producing this type of ag products poster, and I hope ours will serve as an example."

Wisconsin Spreads Resources Across State

A new ag student activity packet, designed for third through fifth grade teachers, may never make it through Wisconsin's post offices. But in this case, that's good. Thanks to state AITC volunteers, teachers are receiving the packets *in person*—after they attend a workshop.

State contact Tom Lochner believes that distributing the lesson plans through teacher training is the best way to go. "We don't mail them out. Instead, our local Farm Bureau ag volunteers contact schools and set up workshops to present the materials." He says the workshops usually last one to two hours. "We even hold training workshops at teachers' conventions."

The activities presented in the packet are based on concepts which cover such areas as agriculture's relationship to human needs, the environment and technology. Specific information about Wisconsin's agriculture is included in many of the activities.

Lochner reports that teachers appreciate the materials. "The lessons cover the topics teachers











Spotlight

Dairy Farmer Strips Down to Ag-ed Basics

It isn't every day an ag volunteer puts on a "fashion show" before a classroom of fourth graders. Unless, of course, that volunteer happens to be Wisconsin dairy farmer Ilona Hansen.

"Recently, I agreed to present a Wisconsin commodities slide show to a local school," Hansen recalls. "I wore a big pair of bib overalls and a big straw hat, with my regular clothes underneath. I asked the students if I looked like a farmer, and they immediately said yes without question."

"Suddenly, I threw off my hat, and it sailed across the room. I took off my overalls and revealed my preppy outfit underneath. The students were surprised to see that I was dressed just like them."

Hansen says her goal was to show the students that farmers are people just like everyone else. "The students really understood my point. After the slide presentation, some of the children came up to me and said things like, 'I didn't know farmers could be cool.'"

Hansen does more for Wisconsin Ag in the Classroom than dispel stereotypes. As part of the distribution plan for the Farm Bureau's student activities packet (see story below), she helps set up teacher training sessions throughout LaCrosse County. "The teachers are very receptive to the materials and the training sessions. Typically, we hold annual luncheons and focus on fourth grade teachers. But, first, second and third grade teachers show interest in our program too."

"I also enjoy helping teachers on an individual basis," Hansen notes. "A local teacher once needed assistance for a week of lessons. I contacted five different farmers who produce commodities that are representative of Wisconsin. One farmer came in per day, so the students learned new information throughout the week. It was a great experience for them."

As a volunteer, Hansen has a unique perspective on familiarizing students and teachers with agriculture. "I grew up in a city. I didn't even see a cow up close until I was 19 years old. And I had contact with Philadelphia kids who knew less about agriculture than I did! When I moved to the farm, I remembered the kids in Philadelphia. I knew what was missing.



Ilona Hansen

"The teachers are very receptive to the materials and the training sessions."

"Teaching others about agriculture has been a natural progression for me," she concludes, "because I know both sides."

have been asking us to cover. Everything is flexible and self-contained, so they can pick and choose.

"The packet also provides a good foundation for extended programs, and features a resource guide of other national and state ag materials," Lochner adds.

Also included in the packet is a self-addressed postcard, which enables teachers to send away for more resources, a poster, and information about field trips and farmers who visit classrooms. "The postcards help us develop a mailing list of teachers who use the packet. We plan to use this list to update interested teachers about the latest ag

resources," Lochner says.

Wisconsin Ag Resources a Hit in Urban Area

Adoption of the new student-activity packet by the Milwaukee school system indicates the packet's high quality. "We presented the activities packet to Milwaukee, and they accepted it. This is the very first time Milwaukee has ever adopted outside materials for use by all of their schools."

According to Lochner, the packet has already reached about 15 counties, and more distribution workshops are being planned.









Farming Techniques of the 1700's

When the ink was still drying on the Constitution two centuries ago, 9 out of 10 Americans were, so to speak, working in the same field—agriculture. But even though most Americans shared the same occupation, farming techniques often varied considerably between regions and ethnic groups.

In the 1700's, land was plentiful and labor scarce. Farmers often cared little for preserving the land, because it was easier to find new land than to try to restore worn out fields. Farmers were spread out across the land on individual farms; exhausted fields and virgin woodland stood next to cultivated fields.

Not all Americans farmed this way, however. Certain ethnic groups, like the Germans, remained closely-knit in the New World and brought with them careful farming methods, such as the use of manures. Old sections of New England kapt a modified version of the European village.

Farmers usually produced nearly all their own food, but specialization had already appeared in areas with ready access to markets. New England produced much livestock and corn; the middle states grew a great deal of wheat as well as cattle; Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina supplied tobacco, South Carolina and Georgia grew rice and indigo. Southerners were only beginning to try cotton.

The era of turnpike (tollroad) building took place during the first half century under the Constitution; the roads improved communication and commerce between the settlements, offering farmers better access to markets. For example, the first such turnpike, from Philadelphia to Lancaster, was opened in 1794.

The flour mills in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland were among the most advanced in the world. In 1780, Oliver Evans had invented a flour mill that operated automatically.

Farm labor was always scarce in America in relation to the amount of land available. Most farmers relied on family members to do all the work on the farm. The South developed its own distinctive form of agriculture—the plantation system—based on slave labor. Because of the labor shortage, Americans had an interest in adopting labor-saving technology, but in 1787 the

typical farmer still worked the way his ancestors had.

Most farmers did only haphazard rotating of crops, seldom fertilized, let their animals run loose, and showed little inclination to try new varieties of plants or livestock. Farm machinery was only beginning to be improved; farmers continued to use wooden plows pulled by oxen, which barely scratched the surface.

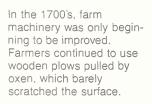
Nevertheless, efforts by leading farmers to improve agriculture were getting underway at the time of the Constitution. In 1785, the nation's first two agricultural societies were formed, the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and the South Carolina Society for Promoting and Improving Agriculture and Other Rural Concerns.

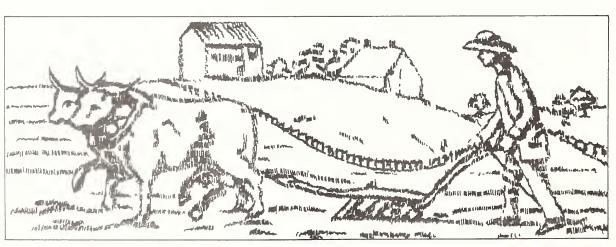
Some of the nation's leading political figures were also leading agriculturalists. For example, Benjamin Franklin had sent back soybean seed when he was Ambassador to France in 1780, although it did not succeed as a major crop until over a century later. Among Thomas Jefferson's innovations was a moldboard plow based on scientific principles, which he invented in 1793. George Washington received a jackass in 1785 as a gift from the King of Spain, and began a conscious attempt to breed mules in 1786. The value of the mule as a work animal was soon recognized.

Information about agricultural practices began to reach a wider audience in this period. Jared Eliot of Connecticut, one of the earliest students of soil science and agriculture in general, had published his influential *Essays upon Field Husbandry in New England* between 1749 and 1759. This was followed by several other books on American agriculture, including Samuel Dean's *The New England Farmer* (1790), which became a standard text on American agriculture.

Finally, the *Old Farmer's Almanac* began publication at Sterling, Massachusetts in 1793, inaugurating a tradition of almanacs that provided farmers with useful hints on agricultural techniques.

This story is taken from the *Agriculture and the Constitution* teacher's kit.





Picture Perfect Ag Books!

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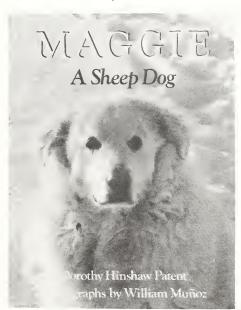
story about a weasel family. She teamed up with Munoz in 1980 for a book on horses, and the pair have been working together ever since. They have produced a series of horse books, as well as stories on crops, farm animals, cows and sheep. "Sheep are so photogenic!" she points out.

A lack of story material is never a problem, says Patent. "Different ideas for books often come out of the last idea," she explains. While working on a book about sheep, she met a guard dog named Maggie. "Oh boy, Maggie deserves a book of her own!" Patent remembers thinking. *Maggie, a Sheep Dog* was published the following year.

Patent and Munoz are currently working on a farm series, with a book on apples to be published in the fall. The story of flower farming is in the works. Other books they have already produced cover wheat and Christmas tree farming.

Patent, who lives in Missoula, Montana, enjoys producing books about agriculture. "It's really important for kids to see where their food comes from," she said. "Everybody's roots are really in the land."

The author enjoys the people she meets through her work. "We've met so many wonderful farmers, ranchers and farm kids. They are so busy and yet they'll give us hours and hours of their time to tell us about what they love most."



A PICTURE BOOK OF COWS

by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent photographs by William Munoz



Dorothy Hinshaw Patent, below, is always surrounded by new story ideas whenever she visits a farm.



Take Advantage of the AITC Library Guide

The AITC Library Guide To Books About Agriculture is now available. The guide lists over 350 books on subjects ranging from farm animals to windmills for grades K-6. Books suitable for readers in the primary grades are specially marked. Titles, authors and cataloging information is listed, as well as a short description of each book.

Order the Library Guide today, and help your students locate resources like *Maggie a Sheep Dog* and many other ag-ed books.

Single copies are available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Ag in the Classroom, Room 234-W, Washington, D.C. 20250, 202-447-5727. You may also contact your state coordinator listed on the back of this newsletter.

MAR./APR. 1988

The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

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